

VZCZCXRO9400
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0209/01 0301524
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 301524Z JAN 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3982
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEADWD/DA WASHINGTON DC//DAS-ZD/DACS-ZK//
RUEAHQA/CSAF WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
RHMFIUW/CMC WASHINGTON DC
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7519
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4504
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4352
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 5846
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 4268
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2840

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000209

SIPDIS

STATE PASS BBG
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD, PA/PRS
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS
SUBJECT: CORRECTED DATE: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/30):
"MITCHELL WILL NEED HONESTY AND PERSISTENCE"

Main Stories:

All papers lead with statements by U.S. Special Envoy George Mitchell, made after his meeting with Palestinian Authority President Abbas in Ramallah on January 29. Al Quds quotes Mitchell pledging to, "turn US commitment to the peace process into actions to realize the two-state solution." Al Ayyam quotes Mitchell calling for the opening of Gaza crossings with Palestinian Authority participation, and commenting on the need for allowing licit goods to enter Gaza if smuggling is to be stopped. Al Hayat Al Jadida reports that Mitchell met with Abbas in order to stress U.S. commitment to the two-state solution, and quote Mitchell calling for a mechanism to allow for the permanent opening of crossings. All front pages highlight that Mitchell expressed his and President Obama's, "deep concern about the loss of Palestinian life and the humanitarian needs in Gaza" and that, "it is important to reach a sustainable ceasefire and we encourage ongoing efforts in this regard."

In photo coverage, Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida front page pictures of Special Envoy Mitchell and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas, meeting at the PA Presidential compound in Ramallah. Al Quds runs an inside photo of Mitchell and Abbas, with all papers running inside coverage of Ramallah meetings with photos of Mitchell and PA officials. Al Quds and Al Ayyam run a front page photo of a young girl in a Gaza hospital crying as an IV is inserted into her arm. Al Quds runs a second photo of a Gaza family sitting outside their temporary, tin shack, next to the ruins of their former home.

Al Quds' front page reports that "senior US sources" state that the U.S. and Europe are determined not to negotiate with Hamas until the organization explicitly recognizes Israel. The paper also quotes the sources stating that the U.S. administration wants to manage

expectations of the outcome of Special Envoy Mitchell's tour to the region, describing it as a fact finding tour.

President Obama's "first victory in Congress" is front page news in Al Quds. The paper runs a Reuters story about the approval of Obama's \$825 billion stimulus package. However, the report also notes that Obama failed to achieve his goal of gaining Republican support for the plan. In further wire stories, the paper reports inside that President Obama's team is preparing a message "to melt the ice" with Iran and that Obama is signing into law a bill to mandate equal wages for men and women. Another inside story reports that Senator Clinton called Lebanese Premier Siniora to reassure him of U.S. commitment to a "safe, independent" Lebanon, while an AFP story reports that U.S. envoy to Afghanistan Richard Holbrook is planning to visit the region next week. A final wire story in Al Ayyam reports that a Congressional delegation is visiting Damascus on January 30.

Al Ayyam's front page runs a wire report about Israeli Premier Olmert briefing Mitchell during their meeting in Jerusalem on July 28, on Olmert's understandings with Palestinian Authority President Abbas about ideas for a final peace settlement. Among the understandings is that 60,000 of the 250,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank would be evacuated.

Al Quds cites AFP in reporting that the Spanish judiciary will investigate a 2002 Israeli strike on Gaza that killed 14 civilians. The law suit was filed by human rights organizations. The paper further reports that Israeli Foreign Minister Livni has sent a letter to her Spanish counterpart strongly objecting to the action of the Spanish courts.

JERUSALEM 00000209 002 OF 002

All front pages report that 18 Palestinians, of which 11 were children, were injured in an Israeli missile strike in Khan Yunis, Gaza on January 29. Al Ayyam further reports on the death of two Palestinians in Egyptian hospitals, who succumbed to injuries sustained in the recent fighting in Gaza. The paper continues that the UN launched an appeal on January 29 to raise \$613 million in urgent assistance to Gaza.

Al Quds' front page cites Israeli daily Haaretz in reporting that Israeli settlers took advantage of the, "aggression on Gaza" to confiscate Palestinian land and begin settlement construction projects on large areas of the West Bank. The settlers built roads, infrastructure and new buildings at several settlement outposts, according to coverage.

All the papers run front page and inside coverage of PLO and public Palestinian negative reactions to statements made by Hamas chief Khalid Mish'al about the establishment of a new authority to represent the Palestinian people. Al Quds' also front pages a wire story about Hamas Gaza leader Haniyah conditioning any ceasefire with Israel on the "lifting of the Gaza siege." Haniyah also called for Palestinian reconciliation during his first public appearance since "the war on Gaza," the papers note.

Al Quds prints an op-ed by EU Development and Humanitarian Assistance Commissioner Louis Michel stating that U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's calls for the investigation of war crimes committed in recent Gaza fighting cannot be ignored. Michel denounces Israel's use of excessive force in Gaza and further reminds Israel of its responsibilities to international law. In another inside report, the paper cites DPA in revealing that Egyptian forces are being trained at the U.S.-Mexican border on how to destroy tunnels.

BLOCK QUOTES:

- 1) Samir Ghayth opines in Al Quds under the title, "Will Mitchell succeed as he did in Ireland?" (01/30): "If George Mitchell wanted to achieve success as he did in Northern Ireland, he should arm himself with the same amount of honesty, determination, and persistence, and pick up from where the 42nd President Bill Clinton and his foreign policy team left off. The peoples in the region, primarily the Palestinians and a large majority of the Israelis, pine for a just peace that will restore the rights of the owners and

grant them freedom and independence."

2) Hamada Farana writes in Al Ayyam under the title, "Will we learn from our enemy?" (01/30): "The Israelis... [are] united behind their government... against a single Palestinian enemy... Our people face several hurdles [to unity]: First, presidential and legislative elections based on the proportional representation law; second, convening the Palestinian National Council to elect a Central Council, the Executive Committee, the Board for the National Fund; and, third, empowering PLO entities. [These steps are necessary] in order to rise to a level where we can resist the occupation successfully... If we do not benefit from the lessons of our enemy, our sacrifices will remain mere suicide."

WALLES